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What Artificial Intelligence Means for Public Diplomacy ^[1]

Artificial intelligence (AI) is already being used to enhance various aspects of public diplomacy. But the incorporation of AI in public diplomacy has its complications. Broader ethical concerns—such as algorithmic biases, data privacy, and transparency—cloud the development of clear policy guidelines and regulations, particularly within government entities leading public diplomacy efforts. Despite these challenges, AI provides a valuable opportunity to maximize impact while improving efficiency, especially for resource-constrained organizations like those in public diplomacy.

Current AI Applications in Public Diplomacy

Creating Content

AI-driven content generation tools allow public diplomacy practitioners to create high volumes of content efficiently. From press releases to emails to social media posts, these tools draft preliminary content, enabling practitioners to focus on strategic messaging, fieldwork, and relationship-building. Although the final touches should be left to human editors, AI expedites the content creation process, proving especially useful in fast-paced diplomatic environments. AI tools can also be valuable for generating ideas, acting as a brainstorming partner to spark creativity. In addition to text, AI can assist with video and audio production, allowing users to generate narrated videos quickly and without needing a full production crew.

Strategy Development

AI algorithms can scan and analyze vast amounts of data to identify topics of interest, trending stories, and emerging trends, helping public diplomacy practitioners stay ahead of the curve. By understanding what captures global audiences' attention, they can proactively shape their content strategy to increase engagement and relevance. Using AI tools, public diplomacy practitioners can try out ideas, with an emphasis on the predictive element, such as analyzing collective emotions and information sensing. AI can also help tailor diplomatic messages to specific audiences, considering cultural, linguistic, and regional differences. Such customization can enhance the relevance and impact of diplomatic communication.

Research

AI tools are becoming essential for public diplomacy research, offering capabilities that streamline the analysis and synthesis of large volumes of information. Practitioners can use AI to quickly summarize and distill key insights from lengthy documents, such as research papers or internal knowledge bases. AI also plays a critical role in data analysis, enabling public diplomacy professionals to identify significant trends and assess statistical relevance. This is particularly useful for monitoring and evaluating public diplomacy initiatives.

AI can enhance the identification of opinion leaders and refine target audience segmentation,

improving the precision and impact of public diplomacy campaigns. Furthermore, AI tools are instrumental in detecting and preventing the spread of deepfake content, which is vital for maintaining national integrity and reputation.

Translation

Effective public diplomacy relies on language, and AI-powered translation tools are proving effective in breaking down language barriers. AI translation allows for faster generation and dissemination of translations, improving efficacy, transparency, inclusiveness and legitimacy. The tools can facilitate translation of diplomatic cables, speeches, or official documents, enabling better cross-cultural understanding. The speed of translation is staggering: real-time.

Operational Improvement

AI tools streamline processes and make operational improvements for public diplomacy practitioners. They are effective for generating media summaries, for instance. A chatbot, powered by AI, can function as virtual assistant to a press officer, interacting with the public, addressing inquiries, and providing precise details regarding government policies and international affairs. AI may also help minimize bias in processes, such as pre-screening grant proposals. Using AI for these purposes allows practitioners to allocate more time to analytical work, program design, and interactions with key stakeholders.

These initial applications of AI highlight its potential for broader adoption in public diplomacy, promising transformative impacts on the field. However, they also underscore the need for further research and better understanding of how audiences interact with AI in this context. Central to this interaction is the element of trust, which forms the foundation of effective and credible use of AI in public diplomacy.

Exploring AI Credibility in Public Diplomacy

Future research on AI credibility in public diplomacy should focus on several key areas that influence trust and perception. The trustworthiness of AI-generated content itself is crucial. Understanding how different audiences perceive AI-generated content—whether they trust it more in data-driven contexts versus creative or narrative applications—is essential. Research should explore how context and audience familiarity with AI impact trust levels, particularly in high-stakes diplomatic communications. Further study could reveal which types of AI-generated content are more likely to be trusted in public diplomacy settings and why.

The perception of organizations using AI for content creation is another important area. Organizations that leverage AI are often viewed as innovative and modern, which can bolster their overall credibility and reputation. Future research should explore whether this perception holds true for public diplomacy institutions such as foreign ministries.

The context of AI use also affects credibility. AI's impact may vary across industries and sectors. For example, AI-generated content in creative fields like art and literature might face scrutiny for authenticity, whereas in data-driven sectors such as finance and health, it may enhance precision and reliability. Public diplomacy lies somewhere in between, balancing the need for authentic, human-driven narratives with the potential precision and efficiency AI can offer.

Last but not least, audience characteristics such as demographics and attitudes play a significant role. Generational differences and cultural factors influence how AI-generated

content and AI-utilizing organizations are perceived. Younger audiences may be more accepting of AI, while cultural attitudes towards technology and automation can vary. Future research should consider these demographic and cultural variables to provide a more nuanced understanding of AI's role in public diplomacy and its impact on credibility.
